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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Defending the Penkovsky Papers' Authenticity

Some weeks ago Stephen Rosenfeld stated in an article that the Church committee had proved the Penkovsky Papers to have been fabricated or falsified by the CIA. This has since been asserted as fact in your editorial columns. May I, as one much involved in the original controversy on the subject, point out that this is not so?

The Church committee merely said, "the book was prepared by witting Agency assets who drew on actual case materials." It said this in passing in a section of its report criticizing the CIA on the different matter—and one far less grave than falsification—of concealing the source of the material from the publisher. (It is surely far from being a principle of American journalism that the rather perfunctory concealment of a source should be thought to invalidate a document.) The committee's phrase as it stands could perhaps at a pinch be construed to mean forgery. But if it had meant to charge the CIA with this serious crime, it would certainly have made it a major point in the indictment and would have asserted it flatly and unambiguously. The natural interpretation of the sentence is that those sections of Col. Penkovsky's reports which were not of intelligence interest were edited and ar-

ranged by a friendly intermediary. The book as it appeared in fact contained a good deal of commentary quite explicitly written not by Penkovsky but by the editor. This has never been at issue and is not relevant to the present charges.

Mr. Rosenfeld cited Victor Zorza as having, at the time, thrown doubt on the authenticity of the book on internal textual grounds. True, but his objections were almost unanimously rejected by students as eccentric and without substance. We are now told, solely on the basis of the Church committee's remark, that the inauthenticity is established. Mr. Rosenfeld found it possible to quote with approval a Soviet description of the papers as a "coarse fraud, a mixture of provocative invention and anti-Soviet slander." And he specified as false the accounts of "high-livers" and "first-strikers" among the Soviet elite. (The papers do not, as he implied, say that this was universal.) All evidence, including public evidence, shows that both these rather different types are indeed not uncommon in Soviet political and military circles.

It will be plain that the Church committee provided no new information at all—and its very absence tends to confirm the official story. There is, in fact,

no evidence whatever that the papers were in any sense faked, or that the material attributed to Col. Penkovsky was in any way fabricated. Proof positive of their authenticity is a matter for the CIA. The agency has been accused of procuring a falsification. I hope it will now settle the question once and for all.

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